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#### **ABSTRACT**

Faculty (n=484) and administrators (n=189) at five public comprehensive universities that had experienced annual budget reductions of at least 10 percent were surveyed concerning their job satisfaction and reactions to the reduction process. Three institutions were identified as having used unplanned approaches, and two used planned approaches. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used and the data analyzed from six interactions of two population sets: faculty and administrators and planned and unplanned institutions. Analysis of satisfaction indicators showed that faculty, administrators, planned, and unplanned populations were generally satisfied with their jobs. The differences were in satisfaction with the process used to reduce the budget, especially between faculty and administrators, and not between institutions implementing planned and unplanned approaches. There was agreement between faculty and administrators on some essential budget reduction strategies and disagreement on others. Both groups generally agreed on the most desirable organizational approach to making budget reductions. Major differences were found on whether communication was adequate during the budget reduction process; administrators were much more satisfied with the communication provided. Faculty were more critical of communication at planned than unplanned institutions. (Contains 15 references.) (Author/MSE)

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# The Satisfaction Level of Faculty and Administrators Following Planned and Unplanned Budget Reductions

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Jean Endo Editor AIR Forum Publications



### Abstract

Because of increased fiscal constraints, higher education has begun approaching budget reductions in a systematic manner. This research was designed to determine which reduction strategies yielded the highest level of satisfaction.

Faculty and administrators at five public, comprehensive universities that had experienced annual budget reductions of at least 10% were surveyed for their job satisfaction and for reactions to the reduction process. Three institutions were identified as having used unplanned approaches; two used planned. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used and the data analyzed from six interactions of two populations sets: faculty and administrators and planned and unplanned institutions.

Analysis of the satisfaction indicators showed that faculty, administrators, planned, and unplanned populations were generally satisfied with their jobs. The differences were in satisfaction with the process used to reduce the budget, particularly between faculty and administrators and not between planned and unplanned institutions. There was agreement between faculty and administrators on some essential budget reduction strategies and disagreement on others. Both groups generally agreed on the most desirable organizational approach to making budget reductions.

There were major differences on whether communication was adequate during the budget reduction process. Administrators were much more satisfied with the communication provided.

Faculty were more critical of communication at planned than unplanned institutions.



The Satisfaction Level of Faculty and Administrators
Following Planned and Unplanned Budget Reductions

Higher education has been a mega-growth industry since World War II when the G.I. Bill enabled millions of veterans to attend college. In 1940 there were 1.5 million students in 1,800 institutions of higher education, and by 1993 it was projected that the number had grown to 15 million students in over 3,500 institutions (NASULGC, 1994). In addition, American higher education is an international model. In 1993 there were 483,000 international students enrolled in American institutions (Barrett & Greene, 1994).

However, times have changed. Layzell, Lovell, and Gill (1996) pointed out that "Higher education and especially public higher education is facing some significant challenges as it approaches the twenty-first century. Funding constraints, addressing the needs of increasingly diverse student populations, and concerns over access to higher education, coupled with increased skepticism of the public toward the academy have created a very uncertain future for public colleges and universities" (p. 93). For the foreseeable future federal and state funding for public higher education are likely to be characterized by austerity. "State tax appropriations for higher education declined one percent between fiscal years 1991-1993. In addition, National Conference of State Legislatures data indicated that nationally higher education as a percent of the state general funding declined from 14.6% in fiscal year 1988 to 12.2% in fiscal year 1993" (p. 94).

This austerity at the state level has grown out of ongoing budgetary problems partially because of a shift of responsibility for funding federal mandates to the states. Other reasons are increasing resistance to taxes and societal problems which put demands on the state coffers and



force higher education into competition with other valuable programs for the public, such as health and human services (Gold & Ritchie, 1995).

Institutions in the last few years have reported no real increase in operating budgets, have faced mid-year budget cuts, or expect budget reductions in the future (El-Khawas, 1992, 1993, 1994). Chabotar and Nonan (1990) found that of the in tutions responding to a 1989 survey, 60% were consolidating, eliminating, or reducing academic departments, and 75% were doing the same with administrative functions.

In 1991 Gaither and DeWitt reported that to accommodate the changes facing higher education, some institutions were continuing to settle for across-the-board reductions, reducing support functions, and protecting academic budgets. Some research has suggested that institutions tend to respond initially to the financial threats in a predictable way through revenue enhancement. The next step appears to include across the board cuts on the theory that all organizations can improve efficiency (Massy, 1996). In 1994, however, El-Khawas found that budgetary and administrative changes appeared to be more selective. Because of the increased financial concerns of higher education and because the fiscal constraints appear to be long term, colleges and universities have begun the process of reducing budgets in a focused, planned, and systematic manner (Pew, 1991).

The increased financial problems of higher education, coupled with the efforts at approaching solutions to financial concerns in a rational and systematic manner, may cause stress among employees. Austin and Gamson (1983) noted more than 10 years ago that "Faculty are experiencing stress from a decline in extrinsic rewards and increased workloads" (p. 44). More



recently Kerlin and Dunlap (1994) reported on a case study at a research university that had experienced a period of fiscal restraint. They found that faculty were experiencing heightened stress, declining morale, lowered productivity, and deteriorating mental and physical health.

Increasingly the political and economic pressures for change within the academy have created discontent and a disconnection between faculty and administration. Institutions need to work in more collective ways, "to evoke the energy and loyalty of their faculties and to build faculty-administrative partnerships that yield an institution capable of effecting needed change through purposeful resolve, rather than through impulsive response and counter-attack" (Pew, 1996, p. 3). Because much of the needed change involves financial issues, studying the effects of the fiscal constraints on job satisfaction and the reaction to various budget reduction methods may provide some guidelines for administrators who must enjoin their faculties to address the tough issues.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between the level of job satisfaction of faculty and administrators and the budget reduction strategies used at public, comprehensive higher education institutions that had experienced fiscal constraints. Further, it was to identify differences between the responses of faculty and administrators.

#### Method

During the fall of 1993 surveys were sent to 263 public universities identified by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as Comprehensive Universities I to identify those that had experienced budget reductions of at least 10% from one year to the next during the 1987-



1993 period, and to identify the reduction strategies used. Comprehensive Universities I was the category of institutions selected because it was the type of institution employing the authors.

Ten choices of budget reduction strategies were given to the respondents in an effort to identify institutions that had used planned vs. unplanned strategies: across the board reductions, vacant positions held vacant, special early retirement incentives, increased tuition and other sources of revenue, reduced deferred maintenance, fewer classes/sections, productivity incentives, retrenchment of tenured faculty, program reduction/elimination, and retrenchment of staff.

Responses were received from 127 institutions (48.3%) and 89 had reductions of at least 10%. In order to inc case institutional comparability, only the 37 universities with total budgets of at least \$50 million that offered doctoral degrees were included in the final group.

In this group, 19 institutions were judged to have achieved budget reductions through planned and systematic approaches where program and institutional priorities were established. Two institutions were selected from this group and were called the "planned institutions". The remaining 18 institutions in the final group were judged to have employed more opportunistic reduction strategies, such as deferring maintenance, freezing vacant positions, across the board reductions, etc. Three were selected from this group and they were called the "unplanned institutions".

A questionnaire including 32 items was designed to measure the job satisfaction level of faculty and administrators, and their reactions to budget reduction strategies that were used.

Although they were essentially the same, there were minor differences in the faculty and



administrator questions where appropriate. The indicators were adapted from those used by Kerlin & Dunlap in their 1993 study.

With the help of chief academic officers at the five institutions, 484 faculty members and 189 administrators selected at random were sent questionnaires in the winter of 1994. Completed instruments were received from 247 faculty members, for a return rate of 51%, and 122 administrators, for a return rate of 65%. The total response rate was 55%, with the five institutions ranging from a high of 70% to a low of 40%. The response rate for the planned institutions was 45% and it was 66% for the unplanned institutions.

Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used in analyzing the data among four population sets, including faculty and administrators at planned and unplanned institutions. Six interactions were analyzed within the four population sets, which were:

- 1. Faculty and administrators.
- 2. Planned and unplanned institutions.
- 3. Planned faculty and planned administrators.
- 4. Unplanned faculty and unplanned administrators.
- 5. Planned faculty and unplanned faculty.
- 6. Planned administrators and unplanned administrators.

Analysis of variance was used to determine differences in job satisfaction for each of the six population interactions. Chi square was used to determine reactions to budget reduction strategies on the same six interactions.



## **Findings**

## Job Satisfaction

Respondents rated their job satisfaction levels on a four-point scale with four being "strongly satisfied" and one being "strongly dissatisfied". The ratings were then regrouped in either satisfied or dissatisfied categories and a ratio determined by dividing the percent of satisfied by the percent dissatisfied on each indicator.

It was generally found that both faculty and administrators were more satisfied than dissatisfied with their jobs, but administrators were more satisfied than faculty. Faculty were most satisfied with the geographic location of the institution, the freedom to work outside the institution, the quality of the faculty, the time required for student advising, and access to both mainframe and micro computing.

The faculty identified seven items with which they were dissatisfied. In the order of greatest dissatisfaction they were: the process for determining salary increases, their salaries, the quality of research facilities/support, time available for research, faculty/administration relations, the quality of the central administration, and the process for determining promotions.

The administrators were most satisfied with the geographic location of the institution, the quality of the faculty, the freedom to work outside the institution, the university's mission, their role in the mission, the university's reputation, job security, fringe benefits, access to micro computing, student quality, the authority to make decisions, and access to mainframe computing. The only indicator on which administrators indicated dissatisfaction was the process for determining salary increases.

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Administrators were more satisfied with more aspects of their employment than faculty, and dissatisfied with only one item. In addition, their ratings on those items common to both groups were consistently higher.

When making comparisons between the planned and unplanned institutions, the mean job satisfaction scores of faculty were very similar (1.61 & 1.57) and the standard deviations were low (.1887 & .2109). The analysis of variance found no significant difference between the groups. The same situation was true for administrators. The mean job satisfaction scores for administrators in planned and unplanned institutions were 1.75 and 1.73 with standard deviations of .1943 and .1917. Again, the analysis of variance found no significant difference between the two groups.

Finally, a multiple classification analysis of variance was conducted on job satisfaction between the planned and unplanned institutions and faculty and administrators. Again, no statistically significant differences were found between any of the groups.

These results indicated that, although administrators were somewhat more satisfied with their jobs, both administrators and faculty were more satisfied than dissatisfied. Whether the budget reductions were carried out in a planned and systemmatic manner made little difference to either faculty or administrators in their ratings of job satisfaction.

# **Budget Reduction Strategies**

Faculty and administrators were questioned in the survey instrument about the communication attendant with the budget reduction process. The first question concerned whether there was adequate communication about the reasons for the budget reductions. A chi



square analysis found that there were statistically significant differences between nearly all of the subgroups except administrators at planned and unplanned institutions. Faculty and administrators disagreed with one another about this question, the planned and unplanned institutions disagreed, faculty and administrators at planned institutions disagreed, faculty and administrators at unplanned institutions disagreed, and faculty at planned and unplanned institutions disagreed.

Communication concerning the budget reduction process was a major point of disagreement. (See Table 1) In addition to faculty and administrators being in disagreement on every category, it was interesting to note that 57.3% of the faculty at the unplanned institutions found that the reasons for the budget reductions were adequately communicated, but only 42.7% of those at planned institutions found that to be the case.

When asked if they found the communication process concerning the cuts to be made was adequate, the chi square analysis again found several significant differences. As with the previous analysis about the reasons for the reductions, only for the planned and unplanned administrators was the difference not significant. In this case the faculty at both the planned and unplanned institutions disagreed that the communication process was adequate, but the difference was significantly different. While 83.6% of the faculty at the planned institutions disagreed, only 64.6% disagreed at the unplanned institutions.

The last question about communication concerned whether there had been adequate communication about the budget reduction decisions. The results were nearly the same, except in this case the faculty and administrators at unplanned institutions were not significantly different.



The administrators at the planned and unplanned institutions did not disagree in this case but in all of the other categories the differences were significant.

It is obvious from these results that faculty and administrators generally disagreed on whether communication was adequate about the reasons for the budget reductions, the process being used to make the cuts, and the decisions that were eventually made. In addition, it was the perception of faculty that communication was worse in the planned institutions than the unplanned.

Additional questions were asked concerning the success of the budget reductions, the fairness and equity involved, the appropriateness of the eventual reductions, the appropriate use of the faculty governance structure and other members of the campus community, and the level of campus morale during the budget reduction period.

Only the administrators at both types of institutions regarded the budget reductions as successful. While there were still significant differences in the chi square analyses, the faculty tended to be somewhat more positive in the unplanned than the planned institutions.

When asked if the reductions were fair and equitable, faculty and administrators again generally disagreed. That disagreement, however, was based more on the planned institutions than the unplanned. In this instance, the unplanned faculty and administrators did not disagree. A slight majority in both categories questioned whether the reductions were fair and equitable. At the planned institutions the faculty overwhelmingly disagreed with the fairness and equity of the reductions and the administrators agreed. In regard to the appropriateness of the reductions, again faculty and administrators generally split with faculty negative and administrators positive.



Based on the previous results, it should be expected that the faculty and administrators were in sharp disagreement over whether the faculty governance structure and other members of the campus community were appropriately used in the budget reduction process. Faculty, regardless of whether at planned or unplanned institutions, did not believe the faculty governance structure had been used while administrators did. The faculty, however, were stronger in their positions than the administrators.

There were no significant chi square differences between faculty and administrators or between the planned and unplanned institutions on the extent of campus morale during the budget reduction period. All of them overwhelmingly agreed that campus morale was low.

# Essential Budget Reduction Strategies

The respondents were asked to rate 10 budget reduction strategies on how essential they are when making reductions. The 10 strategies were:

- 1. Across the board reductions.
- 2. Holding vacant positions vacant.
- 3. Special early retirement incentives.
- 4. Increase tuition and other revenue sources.
- 5. Reduce deferred maintenance.
- 6. Offer fewer classes/sections.
- 7. Implement productivity incentives.
- 8. Program reduction/elimination.



- 9. Retrenchment of staff.
- 10. Retrenchment of tenured faculty.

Table 2 shows the percent in each category favoring the various strategies. Neither faculty nor administrators at planned or unplanned institutions regarded across the board reductions as an essential budget reduction strategy, and there were no significant chi square differences among them. On the other hand, there was a high level of agreement that increasing tuition, providing early retirement incentives, and holding vacant positions open were essential strategies, and there were no significant chi square differences.

There were only a few differences on reducing deferred maintenance as a budget reduction strategy. In total, both faculty and administrators narrowly regarded it as essential. The only major difference was between the faculty at the planned and unplanned institutions. The planned faculty considered it essential and the unplanned did not. Similarly, there were statistically significant differences between the faculty at the two types of institutions. The planned faculty were less positive about implementing productivity incentives than their colleagues at the unplanned institutions. On whether fewer classes and sections of classes should be offered, the responses generally were quite mixed. The only significant difference was between the planned administrators, who thought it essential, and unplanned administrators, who did not consider it essential.

The major differences between faculty and administrators were on reducing or eliminating programs and the retrenchment of staff and tenured faculty. Although the faculty and administrators in both types of institutions were significantly different, the unplanned faculty were



less negative about reducing or eliminating programs than their colleagues at the planned institutions, and the unplanned administrators were less sure about it being an essential strategy.

Again significant, faculty members generally did not see staff retrenchment as essential while both planned and unplanned administrators overwhelmingly considered it essential.

Administrators at both types of institutions considered the retrenchment of tenured faculty essential, but not as much as staff retrenchment. As might be expected, faculty were strong in their belief that faculty retrenchment was not an essential budget reduction strategy.

# Preferred Approaches to Planning Budget Reductions

Finally, respondents were asked to identify what they considered the best of five suggested approaches when budget reductions are necessary. The five choices were:

- 1. Collaborative review of programs by all campus constituencies for selective restructuring and/or downsizing.
- Central administration prioritizing programs for reductions with input from campus constituencies.
- Implementation of opportunistic personnel reductions, such as leaving vacant positions vacant.
- 4. Implementation of across the board reductions and the delay of building and/or maintenance projects.



 Implementation of quality and productivity incentives which would involve reengineering work for increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Every group identified the first strategy, collaborative review of programs, as the most desirable budget reduction strategy, and there were few differences between the percent of each group selecting it (a low of 34.9% and a high of 39.4%). The second choice, however, produced a wider range of preferences. Administrators generally favored the second strategy, central administration setting priorities, while faculty preferred the fifth strategy, quality and work incentives. The third and fourth strategies, general reductions and across the board reductions, were not popular choices with any group.

#### Conclusions

In spite of the fact that the respondents in this study all worked in institutions that had experienced budget reductions of at least 10%, both faculty and administrators were more satisfied with their jobs than dissatisfied. It made little difference in job satisfaction to either faculty or administrators whether the budget reductions in their institutions had been achieved through planned or unplanned strategies.

Faculty and administrators disagreed in every category about whether communication was adequate concerning the reasons for the budget reductions, during the process about the cuts to be made, and about the reductions that were made. In addition, it was the impression of the faculty that communication was less adequate at the institutions that engaged in a planned and systematic process than those that used unplanned procedures.



Faculty and administrators again sharply disagreed as to whether the process had been successful; whether the cuts were fair, equitable, and appropriate; and whether the faculty governance process and other members of the campus community had been appropriately involved. All respondents, regardless of the type of institution, said that campus morale was low during the budget reduction process.

When considering what budget reduction strategies were essential or unessential, there was some agreement and some disagreement among the respondents. Il agreed that across the board reductions were not essential and all agreed that tuition increases, holding vacant positions open, and early retirement incentives were essential, and most considered reductions in deferred maintenance as essential. The planned administrators, and planned faculty by a very narrow margin, saw reductions in classes and class sections as essential.

Faculty and administrators were in overwhelming disagreement over whether programs should be reduced or eliminated and whether retrenchments in staff and tenured faculty were essential. Administrators considered these items as essential budget reduction strategies and faculty did not.

Faculty and administrators at both planned and unplanned institutions agreed that the best approach to budget reductions would be the collaborative review of programs by all campus constituencies for selective restructuring or downsizing. The second choice of administrators was having the central administration set priorities with input from campus constituencies. For faculty the second choice was the implementation of quality and productivity incentives which would involve reengineering work for increased efficiency and effectiveness.



It is interesting to note that faculty and administrators agreed on the collaborative model when considering desirable budget reduction strategies in the abstract. In reality, however, institutions where it was believed that planned strategies had been followed in making budget reductions did not fare as well in the opinion of faculty as those where reductions had been unplanned. The faculty in the planned institutions were less positive about the success and fairness of the process, and they regarded communication during the process as poor.

It may not be possible for budget reductions, especially those as severe as 10%, to be accomplished without major disagreements between faculty and administrators. It now appears that financial limitations for higher education institutions may be a fact of life in one degree or another for several more years. In order for reductions to be made in a manner that is the least disruptive to institutions, it is inevitable that what are defined as planned approaches in this paper must be practiced. Both faculty and administrators agree that the collaborative model is the most desirable. In order for it to work properly, however, it is evident from these findings that greater effort must be devoted to communication and to establishing a clear understanding of the objectives to be accomplished and why they must be accomplished. The skepticism of faculty about communication in general, and the process in particular, at planned institutions in this study calls for more effort in involving them throughout the budget reduction process.

The words of the Pew Higher Education Research Program (1996) were never more true in summing up the challenge to higher education institutions:



The challenge to administrators and faculty is to build an environment of trust and support, a set of relationships that recognizes the intrinsic values that motivate faculty and acknowledges their accountability to the institution that pays them. . . to hold in purposeful juxtaposition the often contrary perspectives of faculty and administration to remain accountable to the public trust while preserving the spirit of inquiry that gives life to the academy's teaching and research" (p. 9).



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Table 1

The Percent of Faculty and Administrators Who Agreed that Communication During Stages of the Budget Reduction Process Was Adequate

	Reasons for Reductions	Reduction Process	Decisions on Reductions
Group	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree
Faculty	42.9	26.6	30.0
Administrators	68.9	48.7	57.6
Planned Institutions	44.3	25.5	28.2
Unplanned Institutions	57.3	40.7	47.7
Planned Faculty	33.3	16.4	13.6
Planned Administrators	70.2	46.8	63.0
Unplanned Faculty	51.2	35.4	44.1
Unplanned Administrators	68.1	50.4	54.2



Table 1 (Continued)

Reasons for Reductions % Agree	Reduction Process % Agree	Decisions on Reductions % Agree	
33.3	16.4	13.6	
51.2	35.4	44.1	
70.2	46.8	63.0	
68.1	50.4	54.2	
	Reductions % Agree  33.3 51.2	Reductions       Process         % Agree       % Agree         33.3       16.4         51.2       35.4         70.2       46.8	



Table 2

The Percent of Faculty and Administrators Who Agreed that Selected Budget Reduction

Strategies Were Essential

Strategy	Fac.	Adm.	Both			<u> </u>		
				Fac.	Adm.	Both	Fac.	Adm.
Early Ret. Incentives	89.1	93.6	90.4	84.1	70.7	79.1	86.4	79.5
Increase Tuition	84.0	91.5	86.3	73.4	78.7	75.4	78.2	83.6
Prod. Incentives	54.0	78.7	62.3	74.6	78.7	76.1	65.7	78.7
Vac. Pos. Open	61.5	73.9	65.3	66.4	70.7	68.0	64.2	71.9
Retrench Staff	49.5	82.2	59.3	49.2	73.3	58.5	49.3	76.7
Prog. Red./Elim.	40.8	91.5	56.7	48.4	70.3	56.5	45.0	78.5
Red. Def. Maint.	61.6	45.5	56.6	45.1	57.3	49.7	52.5	52.9
Fewer Classes	0.0ز	59.6	53.0	44.9	36.0	41.6	47.2	45.1
Across Bd. Red.	44.3°	41.3	43.4	46.5	45.3	46.0	45.5	43.8
Retrench Ten. Fac.	26.0	61.4	36.8	32.8	52.0	40.1	29.7	55.5